

Lippitt Morgans, America's Baroque Horse

By Deborah Siegrist

The term "Baroque horse" has an array of meanings to many different people. Generally speaking, the term defines a horse that exhibits strong, powerful, round hindquarters, an arched, muscular impressive neck, shoulders that are powerful with a good degree of slope to them, a straight or slightly dished profile, thick mane and tail, a well-sprung deep body, with the croup being long, wide, and sloping. This description describes the Lippitt Morgan as well.

The back of the Baroque horse (as well as the Lippitt) should be short and broad owing to well-sprung ribs. The coupling of the hindquarters at the point of the loins is strong and short. From elbow to knee and from stifle to hock the look is long, but viewing the cannon bones we see short. The cannon bones, when viewed from the side should be wide, flat and dense. When viewed from the front, the cannon bone on either side is flat. In essence, the cannons are short, wide, flat and free from meat. The internal cells are tightly packed as opposed to a round bone structure, which consist of loosely packed cells. Because the Lippitt Morgan is supposed to have short cannon bones he can participate in both low and high impact sports, as well as low and high-speed sports. The pasterns of the Baroque horse are neither long nor upright; if they were the rider would be the recipient of a jarring, rough ride.

The above description could fit the Lipizzaner horse, Friesian, the Knabstrup, Lusitano, and Andalusian horse. However, I submit another possibility to you.... the Lippitt Morgan as described by Dr. C.D. Parks and the image (Hale's Green Mountain Morgan 42) that is seen upon every Lippitt Morgan's registration papers today.

The Morgan, in its infancy was described as a versatile horse. This was feasible due to the description given in "Morgan Horses" by D.C. Linsley. Unfortunately, for the Morgan breed as a whole, many today can no longer ascribe to this once viable statement. The breed has become what many have termed a "versatile breed;" a set of unlike objects; a lack of common characteristics. Perhaps breeders have changed the image to "fit" the discipline regardless of breed description.

To this day however, there can be found Lippitt Morgans that greatly resemble America's first Baroque horse - Justin Morgan. There can be found a handful of devoted breeders who understand what breeding for this Baroque horse requires. This comes without frivolous, heartfelt emotion, and

without regard to geographical location. Always breeding to get “as good as” or “better than” what is considered “the best.” Know the horse’s strengths and weaknesses, know his conformation, and know the mechanics of movement. The mechanics of movement includes the breeder “sitting the horse.” There is no room to be a breeder of lawn ornaments in this day and age as it affects usability and salability. Understanding the Baroque Lippitt Morgan’s form, function and the mechanics of movement is very important. For instance, the short, broad back, well sprung ribs, with deep, broad chest and body enables this horse to carry weight and maintains his attribute as an “easy keeper.” Add to that the short, strong coupling of the hindquarters and you enhance his ability to give a strong performance. A short-backed horse is agile and able to change direction quickly and with ease. A well-muscled short-backed horse can carry and support the weight of his rider easily as opposed to the long-backed horse.

Viewing this horse’s forearm I used the term “long” and now will explain the importance with regards to movement. A long forearm is particularly desirable to any performance activity...and consider yourself even more blessed if it is accompanied by a short cannon bone. Length to the radius increases the surface area and length of muscular attachments to gain the greatest biomechanical leverage to impart speed and maximize stride length. This is extremely important if you are considering a horse to use for endurance, racing, eventing etc.

The Baroque Lippitt Morgan has a somewhat long croup and his hipbone is forward. When viewed from either side and from the rear you should see “round.” The thigh is heavily muscled. The stifle is low and well forward. The powerful rear end serves as the engine. Do not confuse an overly fat stallion as being heavily muscled. Fat hides a lot of faults so be aware when purchasing a Lippitt Morgan for any type of sport. The length of the hindquarters is measured from the point of the hip to the point of the buttock. A hindquarter length of 30 – 35% is ideal for speed and power.

It was said that Justin Morgan’s remains were unearthed sometime in the 1830’s and that he had only five lumbar vertebrae as does the Arabian. There was a study conducted of the deceased Morgans at Middlebury and it was found that half the Morgans had five lumbar vertebrae and the other half six.

Via a pasture accident, proof was offered that the nucleus of the Moro Hill herd had five lumbar vertebrae. The half Lippitt had six. You may ask what is the significance of having five lumbar vertebrae. Having five lumbar vertebrae shortens the back, and keeps the coupling tight. If you look at today's Morgans you will see a significant increase in the back length and poor coupling. Too few breeders are looking at the individuals they are breeding. Making an effort at putting your hands on the horse and a fist here and there will help to understand exactly what you have before you. Balance has been misunderstood and misapplied. The Baroque Lippitt Morgan is a silhouette of "round" and "square." Heart girth is deeper and preferred over lighter.

I'd like to address Justin Morgan's sons and their significance in phenotype to the Baroque Morgan.

There were three sons of noted importance: Bulrush Morgan, Woodbury Morgan, and Sherman Morgan. Bulrush Morgan's descendants were noted for their size, substance soundness and are represented by the Morrill family.

Woodbury Morgan had style and action that was quite often termed as bold and resolute. "To be seen was to be admired," was the general description of Woodbury. He was robust and attractive in action and in his spirit. Woodbury was the progenitor of Gifford and Morgan Eagle branches.

"Sherman Morgan, from whom came, in successive generations, the three greatest horses of their days, Black Hawk (Vermont or Hill's), Ethan Allen, and Daniel Lambert."

Many sources have claimed that in Daniel Lambert the type underwent a change as the bloodlines of the two foundation American sires were brought together, Fanny Cook (the dam of Lambert), being by Abdallah, grandson of Messenger and sire of Hambletonian.

In conclusion, one could assume that the Lippitt Morgan, when responsibly bred, is indeed America's Baroque horse. We, as breeders, have an obligation to not only breed the Lippitt to the descriptions of both D.C. Linsley and Dr. C.D. Parks, but also to promote him in an honorable venue. We are the "Olde Guard" of this truly, remarkable Baroque horse.

